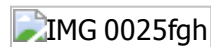


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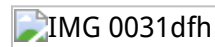
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ASEAN COMMUNITY SEMINAR HELPS TO INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS



PENANG, 15 April 2015 - The ASEAN Community Seminar is deemed as the best platform to raise public awareness regarding the implementation of the ASEAN Community and the role of Malaysia as the ASEAN Chair in 2015.

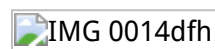
The Director-General of ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat, Dato' Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, representing the Deputy Foreign Minister of Malaysia said, the level of public awareness among Malaysians on the ASEAN community is still low.



He said that this matter should be given a more serious attention to ensure that Malaysians are sensitive to the development of current issues, not only within the nation but also at the regional and global level.

"Various efforts have been taken to publicise the aspiration of the ASEAN community formation and such seminar is seen as a very important platform to widen the channels of information to the public," he said.

He said this at a press conference in conjunction with the ASEAN Community Seminar organised by the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Centre for Global Sustainability Studies (CGSS) in partnership with the Community Foundation of the State of Penang (YKNPP) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, here today.



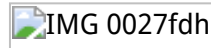
Also present at the ceremony were the representative of the USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Seri Dr. Md Salleh Yaapar; Member of YKNPP Board of Directors, Dr. GP Doraisamy and CGSS Director cum Seminar Chairman, Professor Dr. Kamarulazizi Ibrahim.

Muhammad Shahrul Ikram said, Malaysia as the Chair of ASEAN 2015, is now becoming the focus of the world and the international community would like to see the ability of Malaysia in driving ASEAN towards the establishment of the ASEAN Community by end of the year.

He added that in order to achieve the goal, the government needs to focus on finalising the Roadmap for ASEAN Community 2009-2015 as well as developing and finalising the ASEAN Community's Post-2015 Vision.

"Through these focuses, the government has identified eight important aspects that need to be highlighted by Malaysia during its tenure as ASEAN Chair, including bringing ASEAN closer to the people.

"Besides that, efforts need to be made to strengthen the development of small and medium industries, expand trade and investment, strengthen the institutions, promote peace and stability, and enhance the role of ASEAN as a global player," he said.



Meanwhile, Md Salleh, in his speech, said organising seminar such as this is in tandem with the vision of USM, namely "Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow".

He said that the seminar is also in line with the general requirements of sustainable development at a global level that integrates economic, social and environmental elements.

"In the context of higher education institutions, it should be manifested in learning, research and community engagement, hence becoming a catalyst for the establishment of the desired ASEAN community," he added.

The ASEAN Community can only be realised if all its citizens come together as an integrated and united community.

To achieve this, the ASEAN community must no longer be seen as a field of elite and expert group but must appear as a citizen-based community embodying the motto of 'An ASEAN for All'.

Therefore, the citizens of ASEAN countries, especially Malaysia, need to grasp the concept of the ASEAN Community to ensure that the goal of fostering a closer relationship among member countries can be achieved effectively. - Translation: Tan Ewe Hoe/Text: Marziana Mohamed Alias/Photos: Mohd Fairus Md Isa



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